
OSCAR Recommender User Guide

(Version 3.0)

June 22, 2007

U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia
333 Constitution Avenue, NW.
Washington, DC 20001

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1.0 Getting Started

The Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) is a web-based system that enables clerkship applicants to file complete applications and recommenders to file letters of recommendation online. Applicants designate the OSCAR-participating judges to whom they wish to apply. OSCAR-participating judges are able to sort and screen the applications directed to them and print only what they want to read in hard copy.

The OSCAR system sends out an email invitation called an **Evite** to the recommender once the first applicant designates that recommender and submits the application. The Evite email welcomes the recommender to OSCAR, provides the website link, and issues the username and password. **Recommenders will receive ONLY one Evite email from OSCAR that notifies them that an applicant has requested a recommendation letter.** The Evite email is only generated on the first request for recommendation for that recommender. Recommenders will not receive an Evite email for each additional recommendation request. **However, the recommender may choose to turn on the email frequency for new recommendation requests and pending recommendations.** Additional applicants who request a recommendation from a recommender who has been added to the OSCAR system will simply be added to the recommender's **Recommendation Requests** list in OSCAR. The law schools have the ability in OSCAR to periodically send reminder emails to their recommenders who have pending recommendations or the recommender can use the Receive Weekly Reminder option.

This user manual provides guidance to recommenders on how to perform the following functions:

- Logging into the system
- Changing passwords
- Setting recommendation email notifications
- Creating recommendation templates for future use on recommendations requests
- Viewing recommendation requests and completed recommendation letters
- Uploading recommendation letters

OSCAR provides a feature for recommenders to upload letters of recommendation in PDF format and/or to create letters of recommendation within OSCAR using the online editor. OSCAR also has a mail merge function in the online editor that allows the user to batch upload a letter and address it to multiple judges. **Note: Once the letters are viewable by the judges, letters of recommendation cannot be edited, withdrawn, or deleted. The exceptions are student applications, which will not be released to the judges until noon September 4, 2007 and alumni applicants who place their applications in a Hold for Later Submission status. After the September 4th release date, student applicants may place their applications in a Hold for Later Submission status as well. In both cases, their recommendations letters may be edited or deleted since the applications have not been released to the judges.**

1.1 Help Desk

Call the OSCAR Help Desk at (202) 354-3005 Monday through Friday, between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time,, for telephone assistance in using OSCAR. Questions can also be directed via email at oscar-support@dcd.uscourts.gov.

1.2 OSCAR Informational Resources

After logging into the system, OSCAR displays instructions and direct online access to the OSCAR user guides, information on converting documents to .pdf format, and Help.

1.3 Hardware and Software Requirements

The following hardware and software are needed to use the OSCAR system.

- A personal computer running a standard operating system such as Microsoft Windows
- Internet access and Web browser (Internet Explorer 5.5 and above, Firefox, and Netscape 7.2 and above are recommended)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader

Note: OSCAR only allows documents to be uploaded in .pdf format. OSCAR provides an online editor for users to create their letters within OSCAR, which does not require .pdf format.

1.4 Basic User Interactions

Users normally interact with the OSCAR system in three ways:

- Entering information in data fields
- Using the mouse to click on hyperlinks
- Selecting command buttons to direct system activities

1.5 Button Descriptions

Add New	The Add New button provides the user with the ability to add a new recommendation template.
Apply Search	The Apply Search button allows the user to search for an applicant's name and/or email.
Back	Users click on the Back button within OSCAR to go back to the previous screen. For optimal performance, use the Back button within OSCAR as opposed to your web browser's Back button.
Change Password	The Change Password button allows the user to change his/her system-generated OSCAR password.

Help	The Help button provides users access to system questions and answers.
Submit	The Submit button allows the user to perform a function and exit that record. Once a letter is submitted, that letter <u>cannot</u> be edited or withdrawn if the application has already been released to the judge. (Note: You will know an application has been released to the judge by going to the Completed Recommendations tab and the delete and edit icons to the left of the applicant's name are no longer available.)
Update Email Notification	The Update Email Notification button allows the user to set the frequency of receiving system-generated email of new recommendation requests or pending recommendations.
Upload	The Upload button is used to upload recommendation templates.

2.0 Accessing the OSCAR System

2.1 Login/Forgot Password

This section provides instructions for entering the OSCAR system.

1. From your Internet browser, type in the following address to go to the OSCAR website: <https://oscar.symplicity.com>
2. Log into the system by clicking the OSCAR Sign-in tab and entering your username and password and clicking the "Go" button. (Note: Clicking "Reset" will clear your entry.)

Note: Recommenders will receive their usernames and passwords from the Evite email and may even access OSCAR from the link located within the Evite. For faculty recommenders who used OSCAR last year, your law school's clerkship coordinator may send you an email with a new password for 2007.

Figure 1. Logging into the System

OSCAR Sign-In | **Forgot Password**

OSCAR is currently unavailable

OSCAR Version 3.0 Release Schedule

- Judges - May 7, 2007
- Law Schools - June 1-8, 2007
- Applicants and Recommenders - June 1-8, 2007

Critical Dates under Law Clerk Hiring

- First date when applications may be received
- First date & time when judges meet
- First date & time when interviews begin

Judges, Applicants, School Administrators

For Applicants who would like to create an account, click here to go to the OSCAR User Guides.

[OSCAR User Guides](#)

[OSCAR: What's New](#)

Users must use Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher.

Username:

Password:

3. If you have forgotten your password, click the Forgot Password tab, enter your username and click [go] and the system will generate a new password and send it via email.

Note: The OSCAR Help Desk cannot retrieve forgotten passwords. Users must use the Forgot Password feature. If a user forgets his or her username, call the OSCAR Help Desk at 202-354-3005 or send an email at oscar-support@dcd.uscourts.gov.

2.2 My Account

Users will be able to change their password and setup the email frequency notifications.

Figure 2. My Account

1. Click 'My Account' in the Navigation Bar.

2. Enter your desired password twice and click [Change Password].

3. Set the frequency at which you wish to receive an email reminder of pending recommendation requests. Click [Update Email Notifications].

The screenshot shows the 'My Account' page with a red tab at the top. Below the tab, there are two main sections. The first section is titled 'Change Password' and contains two input fields: 'New Password:' and 'Confirm Password:'. Below these fields is a 'Change Password' button. The second section is titled 'Email Frequency of New Recommendation Requests' and contains the text 'Would you like to be notified of recommendation requests on every request, on a weekly basis, or never?'. Below this text are three radio buttons: 'Each Request', 'Weekly' (which is selected), and 'Never'. Below this section is another section titled 'Receive Weekly Reminder of Pending Requests' with the text 'Would you like to receive a weekly reminder of pending recommendations?'. Below this text are two radio buttons: 'No' (which is selected) and 'Yes'. At the bottom of the page is an 'Update Email Notifications' button. Arrows from the numbered instructions point to the 'My Account' tab, the 'Change Password' button, and the 'Update Email Notifications' button respectively.

My Account

Change Password

New Password:

Confirm Password:

Change Password

Email Frequency of New Recommendation Requests

Would you like to be notified of recommendation requests on every request, on a weekly basis, or never?

Email Frequency: ☐ Each Request ☒ Weekly ☐ Never

Receive Weekly Reminder of Pending Requests

Would you like to receive a weekly reminder of pending recommendations?

Receive Reminders: ☒ No ☐ Yes

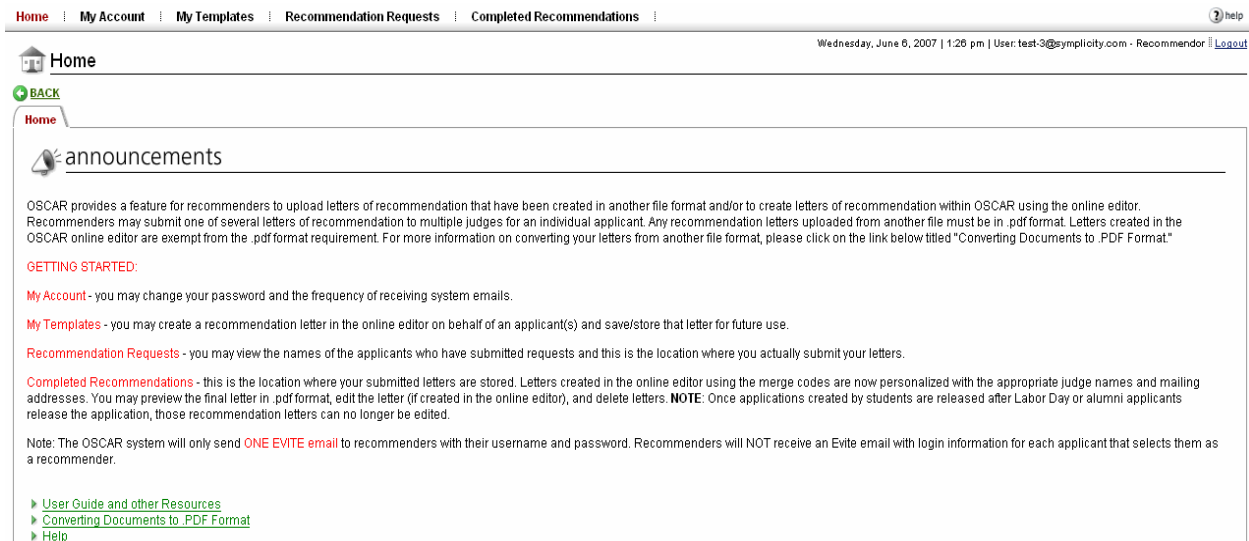
Update Email Notifications

Note: If there are no pending recommendations, OSCAR displays text stating "You have no pending recommendations." Click on the **Back** button or **Recommendations Request List** to go back to the list of requests.

3.0 OSCAR Home Page

Once logged in, OSCAR displays the Home page which will display any Announcements placed by OSCAR administrators and provide access to user guide and other resources.

Figure 3. Home Page

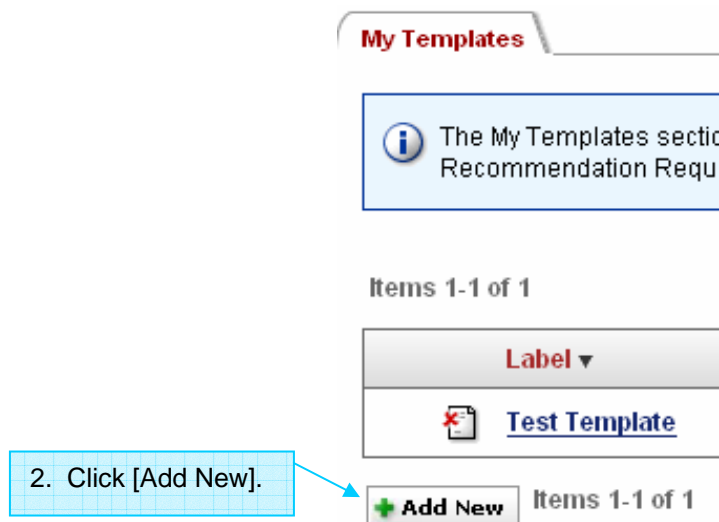


4.0 My Templates

This section of the user guide will show you how to create a document in the system so it may be available for future recommendation requests.

1. Click on **My Templates** in the Navigation Bar at the top of the page.

Figure 4: My Templates



5.0 Recommendation Requests

This section of the user guide addresses viewing recommendation requests, uploading recommendation letters from an existing .pdf format file, and creating recommendation letters within OSCAR. Recommenders have the ability in OSCAR to upload a recommendation letter for a single judge or multiple judges.

Note: Once the letters are viewable by the judges, letters of recommendation cannot be edited, withdrawn, or deleted. The exceptions are student applications that will not be released to the judges until noon September 4, 2007 and alumni applicants who can place their applications in a Hold for Later Submission status. After the September 4th release date, student applicants may place their Applications on Hold for Later Submission status as well. In both cases, their recommendations letters may be edited or deleted since the applications have not been released to the judges.

5.1 Viewing Recommendation Requests

Users may view the latest status of their recommendation requests from Recommendation Requests located in the Navigation Bar at the top of the page. The page will list the applicant name, law school, and number of pending, completed, or withdrawn recommendation requests. The Requested Recommendations column displays the number of recommendations pending for the applicant listed in the first column in red, the number of recommendations already submitted in green, and any requested recommendations for applications that have been withdrawn in gray.

Figure 6. Recommendation Requests

Home | My Account | My Templates | **Recommendation Requests** | Completed Recommendations

Recommendation Requests

[BACK](#) Friday, June 8, 2007 | 9:05 pm | User: Tim

Requested Recommendations

Applicant

Search on the applicant's first/last name, and/or email.

Apply Search

Items 1-2 of 2

Last Name ▼	First Name	JD/LLB From ▼	Requested Recommendations
Gale	Dorothy	Yale Law School	3 pending, 2 complete
name	applicant	Appalachian School of Law	3 pending, 1 complete, 1 withdrawn

5.2 Creating Recommendation Letters

1. Click on **Recommendation Requests** in the Navigation Bar at the top.
2. Click on the applicant's last name. If there are pending recommendations, the Submit Recommendation tab will display a more in-depth screen. OSCAR allows you to submit recommendation letters in three different ways: uploading a .pdf document, using the online editor to compose your letter within OSCAR, and using a letter created in the **My Templates** section. Applicant information is displayed in a sidebar on the right.

Note: If there are not pending recommendations for an applicant, OSCAR displays text stating "You have no pending recommendations." Click on the Back button or Recommendation Requests list to go back to the list of requests.

Figure 7. Recommendation Requests

The screenshot shows the 'Recommendation Requests' form with three numbered callouts in blue boxes on the left, each with an arrow pointing to a specific section of the form:

- 3. Check off which judges this recommendation should be sent to.** This callout points to the **Attach to Applications*** section, which includes the instruction "Please choose which applications for this applicant selections to no more than 50 judges." and two checkboxes: ☐ Select All and ☐ Alesia, James H. (U.S. District Court).
- 4. Choose to create a letter in the online editor, upload a pdf, or choose a template from the "use template" drop down menu.** This callout points to the **Recommendation*** section, which includes the instruction "Choose 'online editor' to compose, file containing the recommendation." and two radio buttons: ☒ online editor and ☐ .pdf file. Below this is a **Use template:** dropdown menu.
- 5. Label the recommendation if you did not choose a Template above or if you want to save this letter.** This callout points to the **Label:** section, which includes the instruction "If you enter a label for this recommendation recommendations. If you do not want to" and a text input field.

5.2.1 Creating Recommendation Letters Using the Online Editor Template

1. If using the online editor, recommenders will have the ability to choose a template created in My Templates or create a new one in the online editor. If creating one, recommenders may take advantage of the merge fields, detailed below.
2. If you choose to type or paste a letter into the online editor, you may include any of the fields listed below. They will be merged to fill in the respective values when you complete your recommendation. Please note that the fields must be typed exactly as they appear; you may copy and paste them from the list to ensure accuracy.

Applicant:


[lname] – applicant last name
[fname] – applicant first name
[email] – applicant email address
[law_school]
[undergraduate_school]

Judge:

[judge_fname] – judge first name
[judge_lname] – judge last name
[formatted_judgename] – first name, last name, generation/suffix (eg., Jr.)
[honorable_judgename] - The Honorable with judge's full name
[formatted_address] – judge's address lines 1, 2, and 3; city; state; and zip code

Note: If you choose to upload a .pdf format file instead of using the online editor, this merge feature will not be available to you.

Copying and pasting from a Word or WordPerfect document into the online editor may result in formatting issues due to hidden characters and format items in Word or WordPerfect documents. We recommend that you type the text in the online editor below, and use the online editor for merging and formatting. However, if you choose to copy and paste, we suggest that you copy from a Word or WordPerfect document and use the "Paste as Plain text"

feature on the second row of the OSCAR online editor icons . By pasting the document in plain text format, most (but not necessarily all) of the hidden characters will be stripped out.

Another option would be to paste the text to Notepad first, which you can find from the Windows Start menu under Programs/Accessories. Pasting to Notepad will strip most (though not necessarily all) of the hidden characters. You can then copy and paste the text from Notepad to the online editor, then add/edit text or make formatting changes.

3. Once the letter is complete, click [submit] at the bottom of the page. **Note: Click on the .pdf icon to see exactly how the letter will look in its merged form before confirming.**
4. A confirmation screen appears informing the user to “Please review your recommendation. If you input text, please make sure it is correct. If you are satisfied, click the **Confirm Recommendation** button. **Note: Letters of recommendation can only be edited or deleted only if the applicant is a current student or the applicant is an alumnus who has saved their application in the Hold for Later Submission mode.** If you would like to make further changes, click the **Edit Recommendation** button.” The screen displays the Typed-In Letter and a list of selected judges. Note: The merge fields you have chosen will be replaced with the appropriate data when the letter is completed.

Figure 8: Online Editor

Template Details

Note: Copying and pasting from a Word/WordPerfect document into the online editor may result in formatting issues due to hidden characters and format items in Word/WordPerfect documents. We recommend that you type the text in the online editor below, and use the online editor for merging and formatting. If you have a strong preference for copying the text from an existing document, click [here](#) for suggestions.

If you choose to upload a letter from another file, please ensure that the document has been converted to .pdf format. For more information on converting your document to .pdf format, click [here](#).

[User Guide and other Resources](#)
[Help](#)

* Indicates a required field

Label: To save a recommendation letter as a template under My Templates, you must first enter a name in the Label field for that recommendation letter and then type the letter in the online editor below. Once you have created a template(s), you need to go to the Recommendation Requests tab to attach it to a recommendation request.

Note: To insert a single line break, hold down the **Shift** key and press **Enter**.

B *I* U **ABC**

Merge Fields

If you choose to type or paste a letter into the online editor, you may include any of the fields listed below. They will be merged to fill in the respective values when you complete your recommendation. Please note that the fields must be typed exactly as they appear; you may copy and paste them from the list to insure accuracy.

NOTE: If you choose to upload an already completed letter instead of using the online editor, this merge feature will not be available to you.

Applicant:

[name]
 [name]
 [email]
 [law_school]
 [undergraduate_school]

Judge:

[judge_fname]
 [judge_lname]
 [formatted_judgename]
 [honorable_judgename] (Judge name with The Honorable)
 [formatted_address]

5.2.2 Creating a Recommendation Letter from an Existing PDF File

Recommenders may upload recommendation letters from an existing .pdf formatted file. OSCAR allows the recommender to upload a letter to a single judge or batch upload a letter to multiple judges. Note: The OSCAR System only accepts documents already in .pdf format.

Note: If you choose to attach a file, please understand that this identical file will be transmitted to every judge you check. If you want to send an identical “to whom it may concern” letter to every judge, this feature is perfect for that. If you want to personalize the letters at all (including each judge’s name, for example), you should either submit the letters using the online editor or create individualized letters for each judge (each with its own filename) and attach the appropriate individual file to each judge.

Figure 9: File Upload

Choose "online editor" to compose, format, and edit your recommendation existing .pdf file containing the recommendation.

☐ online editor ☒ .pdf file

Maximum File Size: 300 KB

File:

Please select your document to upload

Browse...

1. Click [Browse] to search for the file and then click [ok] to select it.

2. Click [Submit] at the bottom of the page.
3. A confirmation screen appears stating "Please review your recommendation. If you input text, please make sure it is correct. If you are satisfied, click the **Confirm Recommendation** button. If you would like to make further changes, click the **Edit Recommendation** button." Letters uploaded from an existing .pdf file cannot be edited in OSCAR. If there is a problem with the .pdf letter and the application has not been released to the judge yet, you can go to the Completed Recommendations tab, find the letter, and delete it. You can then fix the letter in its original software program and then go back and re-upload it again. The screen displays the name of the uploaded file and name(s) of the judge(s) for Attach to Applications. **Note: Once you click Confirm Recommendation, the letter cannot be edited, withdrawn, or deleted if the application has already been released to the judge.**
4. To view the appearance of the letter, click on the icon next to the judge's name in the **Completed Recommendations** list. A .pdf version of the letter will open in a separate window.

5.3 Completed Recommendations

The Completed Recommendations tab allows recommenders to perform the following functions:

- Preview completed recommendation requests
 - Delete a single letter or batch of letters and edit recommendation letters.
Note: This function can only be performed if the applicant is a current student and the application has not been released to the judge or if the applicant is an alumnus who hasn't submitted their application and has placed the application on Hold for Later Submission.
1. Click on the **Completed Recommendations** tab.
 2. Click on the .pdf file in the **Preview** column next to an applicant's name. The .pdf file will open in another window displaying the actual recommendation letter.

3. For recommenders with multiple applicants, click in the **Applicant Search** field and type the name of the applicant you would like to search for.
4. To delete a recommendation, click on the icon with the red x to the left of the applicant's name. A message asking "Are you sure you want to delete this recommendation?" will appear. Click **OK** to proceed.
5. To edit a recommendation, click on the icon with the pencil to the left of the applicant's name, make your changes, and click on the Submit button.
Note: This function can only be performed if the OSCAR online editor was used to create the recommendation letter.

Figure 10. Completed Recommendations

Completed Recommendations

Instructions
 You may review your completed letters of recommendation here. For applications which are not yet viewable by the judge, you may edit or delete the recommendation.

[User Guide and other Resources](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[Help](#)

Applicant
 Search on the applicant's first/last name, and/or email.

Batch Options ▾ Items 1-1 of 1 < Previous | Jump 1 | Next >

	Last Name ▾	First Name	JD/LLB From ▾	Judge ▾	Preview
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demo	John	University of California, Davis School of Law (King Hall)	Alesia, James H.	

To delete multiple recommendations, check mark them in the checkbox column and then click on Batch Options and select Delete Applications.

6.0 Accessing OSCAR as the CC

OSCAR was designed for applicants to designate their recommenders and carbon copy (cc:) their recommendation requests to a designated law school staff person or the recommender's assistant. The cc: feature is setup to allow the recommender's assistant or other designated law school staff person to have access to the recommender's account in order to upload recommendation letters. Note: An applicant may only designate one cc: law school staff person or the recommender's assistant per recommender.

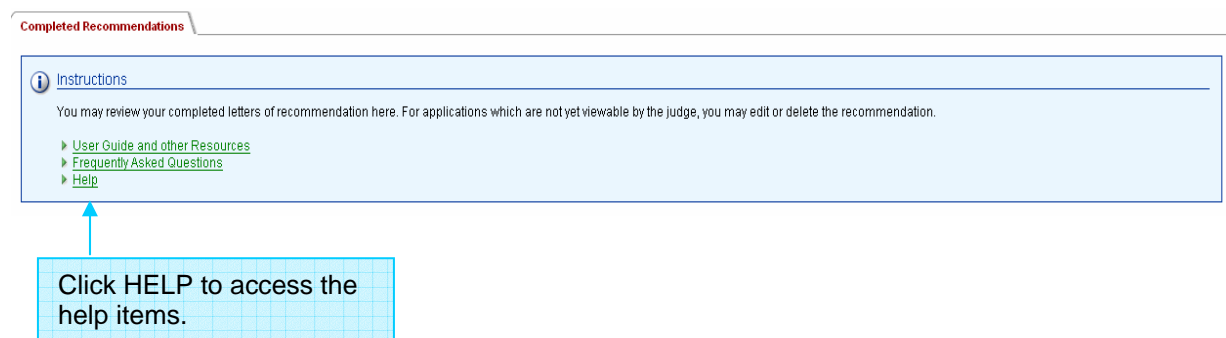
Recommenders will receive one Evite email from OSCAR that notifies them that an applicant has requested a recommendation letter. The Evite email is only generated on the first request for recommendation for that recommender. Recommenders will not receive an Evite email for each additional recommendation request, even for new applicants unless the email notification option is chosen for new recommendation requests under My Account. The Evite email will welcome the recommender to OSCAR, provide the website link, and issue the username and password. OSCAR will periodically send reminder emails to only recommenders (and cc's) who have pending recommendations. **The designated cc: law school staff person or the recommender's assistant will receive a copy of the Evite email that is sent to the recommender providing the recommender's username and password. The cc: capability will allow the user to access the recommender's account and upload recommendation letters on behalf of the recommender. The cc: law school staff person will use this user guide in the same manner as the recommender.**

7.0 Help Feature

OSCAR provides a Help feature for users to access when they have any system questions. The Help feature is located towards the top right of the screen. The Help can be accessed from the Home Page or in all five sections towards the top right of the screen.

1. Click on the **Help** link in the info window at the top of every page.
2. Help topics for the section you are in will display in a new window.

Figure 11: Example of Help Link (Completed Recommendations tab)



8.0 Logging Out

To log out of the system, click on **Logout** located at the top of the screen. Users can log out of the system from any OSCAR screen.

Figure 12. Logging Out

